PITTA

**Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)**
New Series Volume 23 Number 6 June 2026

**FIELD TRIP: Sunday, June 28, 2026, 6.15AM: Zaheerabad. Meeting Point(s): Metro Station, Miyapur, 04:30AM; BHEL Bus Stop, Lingampally, 04:45AM; Taj Dhaba, Muthangi, 05:00AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Sathwik Reddy (Mobile: 98858-07186)**

The forest region near Zaheerabad, in close proximity to the Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary on the Telangana-Karnataka border, is a critical habitat characterized by a rich tapestry of flora and fauna. This area, primarily a dry land ecosystem, showcases a unique blend of forest types and topographical features that support a remarkable diversity of life. The core of this forest is dominated by dry and moist deciduous forests, which transition into Acacia and Teak plantations on the fringes. The forest is renowned for its significant populations of valuable tree species such as Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) and Sandalwood (*Santalum album*), along with a variety of medicinal herbs and trees. The undulating terrain includes rocky outcrops and scrublands, typical of the Deccan thorn scrub forest eco-region. The presence of the Chandrampalli dam and several other smaller water bodies creates a vital network of reservoirs and streams. This network sustains the region's wildlife, especially during the dry seasons, and contributes to the moist deciduous vegetation found in some core areas.

The forest hosts many mammals such as the Blackbuck, Indian Wolf, Striped Hyena, and the Four-horned Antelope. The bird life is particularly noteworthy: White-bellied Minivet, Small Minivet, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Painted Francolin, various quail species like the Rain Quail, Jungle & Rock Bush Quails, and Barred Buttonquail – besides many other resident species.

This will be a half-day trip, so carry adequate water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. New Deccan Birders hats and caps will be available for purchase; please carry adequate cash.

## FIELD NARRATIVE FROM INDIA'S REMOTE ISLAND FRONTIER
## Trip Report: South Andaman & Narcondam, March 16-23, 2026

Text and Photos: Aditya Rao (unless otherwise attributed)

**A view of Narcondam Island, dormant volcanic island rising from the Bay of Bengal**

Some birding journeys are built around species. Others are shaped by landscape. A very small few are defined by access, remoteness, and the sense that you are operating at the edge of what is realistically possible. The March 2026 expedition across South Andaman, Middle Andaman, North Andaman, and onward to Narcondam fell firmly into that last category – and it had been in the works for a full year before a single bird was seen.

Narcondam is not a routine destination. It is a dormant volcanic island in the Bay of Bengal with no permitted landings. That combination of geological uniqueness, ecological isolation, and logistical constraint makes it one of the most compelling birding objectives in India. When the trip was announced in April 2025, I immediately committed – a full year in advance. You do not pass on an opportunity like this.

**DAY 1 – 18 MARCH: SIPPIGHAT & FERRARGUNJ**

**Road through Ferrargunj Forest, a tunnel of trees leading to endemic territory**

**Javan Pond Heron**

**Yellow Bittern**

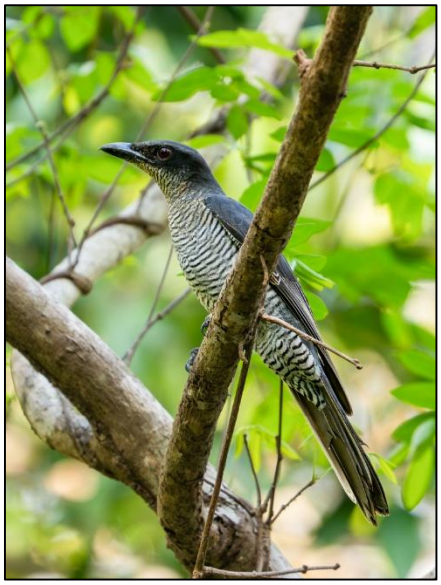
**Long-toed Stint**

The trip started at the Sippighat Salt Marsh, producing Javan Pond Heron, Chinese Pond Heron, Yellow Bittern, and Long-toed Stint, along with several Pin-tailed and Common Snipe. The interplay between resident wetland birds and migratory species was immediately evident.

**Common Snipe**

**Andaman Wood Pigeon**

By the afternoon, attention shifted to Ferrargunj Forest, where the standout was a flock of approximately eight Andaman Wood Pigeons – a rare and hard bird at the islands, rarely encountered in numbers. The supporting cast included Andaman Cuckoo Dove, Andaman Cuckooshrike, Long-tailed Parakeet, Andaman Green Pigeon, Andaman Drongo, Andaman Treepie, Andaman Bulbul, and Asian Fairy Bluebird.



**Andaman Cuckooshrike**

**Andaman Green Pigeon**

The following dawn session at Ferrargunj added Andaman Crake, Freckle-breasted Woodpecker, Andaman Woodpecker, Andaman Shama, Andaman Drongo and Andaman Flowerpecker.

**Andaman Bulbul**

**Andaman Crake** (Photo: Vinay Chakravarthy)

**Andaman Cuckoo Dove**

**Andaman Shama**

**Andaman Drongo**

**Andaman Flowerpecker**

**Eastern Marsh Harrier**

**Richard's Pipit**

A subsequent visit to Ograbraj Wetlands yielded Grey-headed Lapwing, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Edible-nest (now White-nest) Swiftlet, and Richard's Pipit.

**DAY 2 – 19 MARCH: MFV CAIMAN TO DIGLIPUR**

**MFV Caiman at Diglipur Jetty**

The MFV Caiman, a sturdy twin-outboard offshore cabin boat with 500hp, departed Haddo Jetty, Port Blair, for the 100-nautical-mile run north to Diglipur. The sea was rough; we could barely push beyond 20 knots and the crossing took nearly six hours. Emerald islands passed one after another through spray and chop, with occasional Black-naped Terns appearing as we crossed past Rangat and Mayabunder.

**Black-naped Tern**

**Saddle Peak, highest point in the Andamans, near Diglipur**

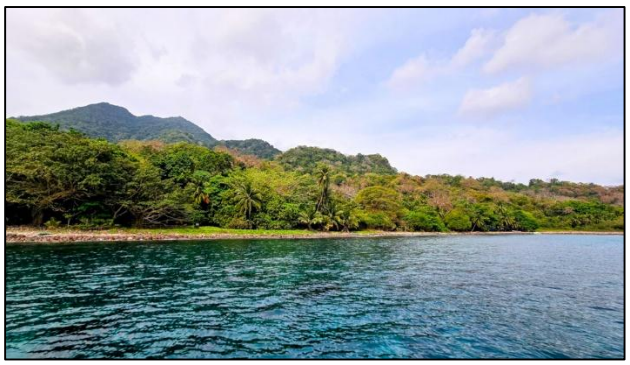
We reached Aerial Bay Jetty around 5:30 PM, past sunset, to be welcomed by thousands of Plume-toed Swifts and Pacific Swallows wheeling overhead in the last light – eBird logged 1,000+ swifts at the jetty that evening. A quick snack near the jetty, then Pristine Beach Resort, and a very early night. We had been up by 3:30AM.

**DAY 3 – 20 MARCH: NARCONDAM**

**Sunrise over the Bay of Bengal**

There are journeys, and then there are arrivals that stay with you for life.

The boat left at 4:30AM into complete darkness, heading northeast for 145-150 km across open water. For much of the crossing there was only sea. Narcondam did not reveal itself immediately. It appeared gradually – a distant shape, slowly resolving against the horizon into a steep volcanic rise.



**Narcondam's forested coastline**

**The wave-eroded rock face at the base of Narcondam Island**

As we drew closer, the island began to reveal itself: rugged coastal faces, dense tropical vegetation, the unmistakable profile of a place that has belonged entirely to nature for millions of years. It felt untouched in a way that is increasingly rare.

**A pair of Narcondam Hornbills in flight**

**Narcondam Hornbill female (L) and male (R)**

Narcondam Hornbills appeared almost as guardians – flying from tree to tree across the forested slopes, silhouetted against green canopy. Effortless. Unbothered. Endemic. We stopped well short of shore – landing is not permitted – and observed entirely from offshore. In that moment, it was not just birding. It was perspective.

**Narcondam Hornbill male**

**Narcondam Hornbill female**

The eBird checklist recorded 56 Narcondam Hornbills – noted as 'literally flying around in large flocks across the island, extremely active.' Additional species included Pied Imperial Pigeon (42 birds), Pacific Reef Heron, White-bellied Sea Eagle, and a Taiga Flycatcher heard from within the forest. We spent 3.5 hours around the island.

**PELAGIC BIRDS – ON THE WAY BACK FROM NARCONDAM**

**Bridled Tern**

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** (Photo: Samanvitha Rao)

The return leg delivered outstanding open-water birding: Bridled Tern, Wedge-tailed Shearwater (dark morph), Sooty Tern, Common Tern, and Red-billed Tropicbird. A large pod of Bottlenose Dolphins escorted the boat for an extended period, leaping alongside in what felt like a fitting close to the expedition's centrepiece day.

**Red-billed Tropicbird**

**Bottlenose Dolphin**

**DAY 4 – 21 MARCH: RETURN VIA RANGAT**

**Cutting through the Yeratta Mangroves near Rangat**

**Great Crested Tern**

The return passage south was calmer – four hours versus six. A detour near Rangat in Middle Andaman delivered the target: Pale-footed Bush Warbler at Sabari village – a brief but conclusive glimpse before it vanished into the thicket, classic skulker behaviour. A Great Crested Tern was noted near Kadamtala while underway.

**Red-throated Pipit**

**Oriental Pratincole**

**Chinese Pond Heron**

Back at Sippighat that afternoon, we got the Red-throated Pipit, Oriental Pratincole, Chinese Pond Heron in breeding plumage, Andaman Teal, and Slaty-breasted Rail. The site rewarded a second visit with species that had been absent or elusive on Day 1 – a reminder that wetland sites in the Andamans shift their cast between morning and afternoon sessions.

**Andaman Teal**

**Pacific Swallow**

**Red Collared Dove**

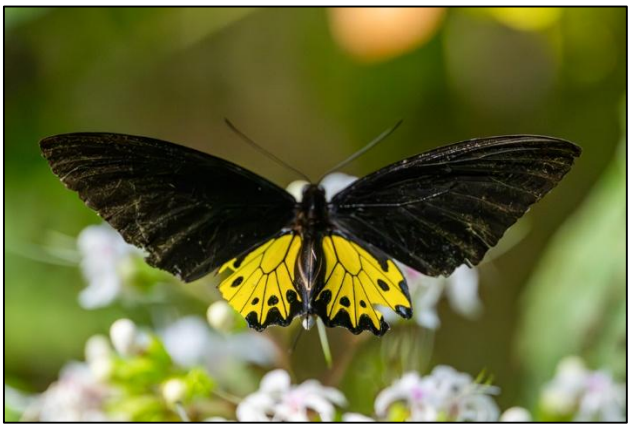
**Pin-tailed Snipe**

**DAY 5 – 22 MARCH: KALATANG & CHOULDARI**

**Japanese Sparrowhawk** (Photo: Samanvitha Rao)

An additional day at Kalatang, a magnificent coastal rainforest, produced Violet Cuckoo and Chinese Sparrowhawk in the morning. The afternoon return visit yielded Ruddy Kingfisher – a bird that rewards patience with one of the most vividly coloured sightings of the entire trip.

**Ruddy Kingfisher**



**Common Birdwing**

The day ended at Chouldari Wetland with the Mangrove Whistler – quiet, elusive, and a perfectly characterful conclusion to five days of South Andaman birding.

**Mangrove Whistler**

**FAREWELL – 23 MARCH**

An Andaman Coucal called from the garden at Rainbird Resort as we packed for the flight back to Hyderabad.

**Andaman Coucal**

Six days. 117 species. 35 checklists. One volcanic island in the Bay of Bengal that stays with you long after you have come home.

What defines this expedition is not the checklist, impressive as it is. It is the combination of access, habitat diversity, and ecological context. Narcondam stands apart not just because of the hornbill – but because of what it represents: a largely intact system, geographically isolated and biologically distinct, observed with the respect that comes from staying offshore and watching from a distance.

The full list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

| Sl No | Species Name | Scientific Name | Sl No | Species Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lesser Whistling-Duck | *Dendrocygna javanica* | 51 | Indian Pond Heron | *Ardeola grayii* |
| 2 | Cotton Pygmy-Goose | *Nettapus coromandelianus* | 52 | Chinese Pond Heron | *Ardeola bacchus* |
| 3 | Garganey | *Spatula querquedula* | 53 | Javan Pond Heron | *Ardeola speciosa* |
| 4 | Andaman Teal | *Anas albogularis* | 54 | Eastern Cattle Egret | *Ardea coromanda* |
| 5 | Rock Pigeon | *Columba livia* | 55 | Great Egret | *Ardea alba* |
| 6 | Andaman Wood Pigeon | *Columba palumboides* | 56 | Medium Egret | *Ardea intermedia* |
| 7 | Red Collared Dove | *Streptopelia tranquebarica* | 57 | Grey Heron | *Ardea cinerea* |
| 8 | Andaman Cuckoo Dove | *Macropygia rufipennis* | 58 | Purple Heron | *Ardea purpurea* |
| 9 | Andaman Green Pigeon | *Treron chloropterus* | 59 | Oriental Honey-buzzard | *Pernis ptilorhynchus* |
| 10 | Green Imperial Pigeon | *Ducula aenea* | 60 | Crested Serpent Eagle | *Spilornis cheela* |
| 11 | Pied Imperial Pigeon | *Ducula bicolor* | 61 | Andaman Serpent Eagle | *Spilornis elgini* |
| 12 | Andaman Coucal | *Centropus andamanensis* | 62 | Changeable Hawk Eagle | *Nisaetus cirrhatus* |
| 13 | Asian Koel | *Eudynamys scolopaceus* | 63 | Japanese Sparrowhawk | *Tachyspiza gularis* |
| 14 | Violet Cuckoo | *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus* | 64 | Eastern Marsh Harrier | *Circus spilonotus* |
| 15 | Indian Cuckoo | *Cuculus micropterus* | 65 | White-bellied Sea Eagle | *Icthyophaga leucogaster* |
| 16 | Brown-backed Needletail | *Hirundapus giganteus* | 66 | Narcondam Hornbill | *Rhyticeros narcondami* |
| 17 | Plume-toed Swift | *Collocalia affinis* | 67 | Blue-tailed Bee-eater | *Merops philippinus* |
| 18 | Edible-nest Swiftlet | *Aerodramus fuciphagus* | 68 | Chestnut-headed Bee-eater | *Merops leschenaulti* |
| 19 | Slaty-breasted Rail | *Lewinia striata* | 69 | Common Kingfisher | *Alcedo atthis* |
| 20 | Eurasian Moorhen | *Gallinula chloropus* | 70 | Stork-billed Kingfisher | *Pelargopsis capensis* |
| 21 | Grey-headed Swamphen | *Porphyrio poliocephalus* | 71 | Ruddy Kingfisher | *Halcyon coromanda* |
| 22 | Watercock | *Gallicrex cinerea* | 72 | White-throated Kingfisher | *Halcyon smyrnensis* |
| 23 | White-breasted Waterhen | *Amaurornis phoenicurus* | 73 | Collared Kingfisher | *Todiramphus chloris* |
| 24 | Andaman Crake | *Rallina canningi* | 74 | Freckle-breasted Woodpecker | *Dendrocopos analis* |
| 25 | Pacific Golden Plover | *Pluvialis fulva* | 75 | Andaman Woodpecker | *Dryocopus hodgei* |
| 26 | Little Ringed Plover | *Thinornis dubius* | 76 | Alexandrine Parakeet | *Psittacula eupatria* |
| 27 | Grey-headed Lapwing | *Vanellus cinereus* | 77 | Red-breasted Parakeet | *Psittacula alexandri* |
| 28 | Tibetan Sand Plover | *Anarhynchus atrifrons* | 78 | Long-tailed Parakeet | *Psittacula longicauda* |
| 29 | Pheasant-tailed Jacana | *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* | 79 | Vernal Hanging-Parrot | *Loriculus vernalis* |
| 30 | Eurasian Whimbrel | *Numenius phaeopus* | 80 | Small Minivet | *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* |
| 31 | Pin-tailed Snipe | *Gallinago stenura* | 81 | Scarlet Minivet | *Pericrocotus speciosus* |
| 32 | Common Snipe | *Gallinago gallinago* | 82 | Oriental Cuckooshrike | *Coracina javensis* |
| 33 | Common Sandpiper | *Actitis hypoleucos* | 83 | Andaman Cuckooshrike | *Coracina dobsoni* |
| 34 | Green Sandpiper | *Tringa ochropus* | 84 | Mangrove Whistler | *Pachycephala cinerea* |
| 35 | Wood Sandpiper | *Tringa glareola* | 85 | Black-naped Oriole | *Oriolus chinensis* |
| 36 | Common Redshank | *Tringa totanus* | 86 | Black Drongo | *Dicrurus macrocercus* |
| 37 | Common Greenshank | *Tringa nebularia* | 87 | Andaman Drongo | *Dicrurus andamanensis* |
| 38 | Long-toed Stint | *Calidris subminuta* | 88 | Greater Racket-tailed Drongo | *Dicrurus paradiseus* |
| 39 | Oriental Pratincole | *Glareola maldivarum* | 89 | Black-naped Monarch | *Hypothymis azurea* |
| 40 | Sooty Tern | *Onychoprion fuscatus* | 90 | Brown Shrike | *Lanius cristatus* |
| 41 | Bridled Tern | *Onychoprion anaethetus* | 91 | Andaman Treepie | *Dendrocitta bayleii* |
| 42 | Common Tern | *Sterna hirundo* | 92 | Large-billed Crow | *Corvus macrorhynchos* |
| 43 | Black-naped Tern | *Sterna sumatrana* | 93 | Pacific Swallow | *Hirundo javanica* |
| 44 | Great Crested Tern | *Thalasseus bergii* | 94 | Barn Swallow | *Hirundo rustica* |
| 45 | Red-billed Tropicbird | *Phaethon aethereus* | 95 | Andaman Bulbul | *Microtarsus fuscoflavescens* |
| 46 | Wedge-tailed Shearwater | *Ardenna pacifica* | 96 | Red-whiskered Bulbul | *Pycnonotus jocosus* |
| 47 | Yellow Bittern | *Botaurus sinensis* | 97 | Arctic Warbler | *Phylloscopus borealis* |
| 48 | Pacific Reef Egret | *Egretta sacra* | 98 | Pale-footed Bush Warbler | *Hemitesia pallidipes* |
| 49 | Little Egret | *Egretta garzetta* | 99 | Indian White-eye | *Zosterops palpebrosus* |
| 50 | Little Heron | *Butorides atricapilla* | 100 | Asian Glossy Starling | *Aplonis panayensis* |

| Sl No | Species Name | Scientific Name | Sl No | Species Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 101 | Common Hill Myna | *Gracula religiosa* | 110 | Ornate Sunbird | *Cinnyris ornatus* |
| 102 | White-headed Starling | *Sturnia erythropygia* | 111 | Asian Fairy Bluebird | *Irena puella* |
| 103 | Common Myna | *Acridotheres tristis* | 112 | Forest Wagtail | *Dendronanthus indicus* |
| 104 | Orange-headed Thrush | *Geokichla citrina* | 113 | Grey Wagtail | *Motacilla cinerea* |
| 105 | Asian Brown Flycatcher | *Muscicapa dauurica* | 114 | Eastern Yellow Wagtail | *Motacilla tschutschensis* |
| 106 | Oriental Magpie-Robin | *Copsychus saularis* | 115 | White Wagtail | *Motacilla alba* |
| 107 | Andaman Shama | *Copsychus albiventris* | 116 | Richard's Pipit | *Anthus richardi* |
| 108 | Taiga Flycatcher | *Ficedula albicilla* | 117 | Red-throated Pipit | *Anthus cervinus* |
| 109 | Andaman Flowerpecker | *Dicaeum virescens* | | | |

Some other photos taken during the trip:

**Grey-headed Swamphen**

**Stork-billed Kingfisher**

**Yellow Bittern**

**Black-naped Tern**

**Chinese Pond Heron in partial breeding plumage**

**Andaman Cuckooshrike**

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# NATURE CALLS

Harshvardhan Bukka

**A sketch made by Yadavalli Nimisha after the walk**

You're never truly solitary,
In your daily sylvan journey,
When you've learnt to identify,
The raucous Rufous Treepie.

Puk-puk-puk, the Barbet calls,
In the earthy-leafy scent, the forest-carpet calls,
The teetu-teetu tells you,
There's Francolins nearby.
And as you walk past the Lantanas,
The butterflies flutter by.

Too-too-tweet,
The music fills your ears,
Your eyes dart around to meet,
The Tickell's Blue Flycatcher.

Iridescent blue-green,
Darting between bushes,
The shy peafowl flock,
Pauses, tempts, and then rushes.

You come here to feel better,
You come to feel the thrill,
At the sight of the Flameback woodpecker,
Or the Indian Grey Hornbill.

They flit about their arboreal disguise,
And twitter as if they know you,
You savour this urban paradise,
At Oxygen Park, OU.

You bow your head down to Gaia,
Mutter your thanks and ask forgiveness,
Then you bid farewell to your feathery friends,
And set about your daily business.

One foot out of the gates,
A swarm of thoughts fills your mind,
You buckle up for the (rat) race,
For the stress and strain of deadlines.

You don't buckle under it though,
Nor do you let it overwhelm you,
You march forth with a smile knowing,
Tomorrow your friends will again welcome you.

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## Trip Report: Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, May 24, 2026

Syeda Batool Zaidi

**Spotted Owlet** (Photo: Ali Hyder)

Imagine this.

A slow, sun-kissed Sunday morning. When the breeze slightly tugs at your clothes and dances with the trees ever so often. The birds come out to play hide & seek, and their eager, early chirping makes for a sweet, soulful melody that only nature could produce.

This May 24th, what is usually a boring, movie-induced Sunday start, turned into a memorable experience.

This May 24th, I was out and about with Deccan Birders, who introduced me to the art of bird-watching.

As a nature lover who adores trees, I learned about their residents. Fascinating and beautiful creatures whose beauty and importance often go unnoticed. The journey started out with the Deccan Birders all gathering together, and a brief meeting was held to let the newbies know about the rules and regulations.

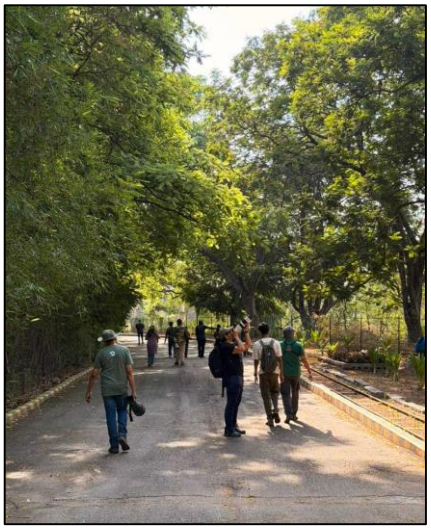
The newbies were assigned a group leader, who would tell us know where to spot the birds and the names of the birds.

Our team leader was Abhinav. He knew the name of every single bird we walked past, which was highly impressive since our leader was about 10 years old. Now *that* was inspiring!

**Common Hoopoe** (Photo: Ali Hyder)

**White-throated Kingfisher** (Photo: Ali Hyder)

Abhinav guided us in the most detailed way possible. He introduced us to many birds, including the Oriental Magpie Robin, a small black-and-white bird known for its beautiful, melodious songs. Another one we saw was a Kingfisher, drinking water from a nearby pond. The sun made its blues and oranges pop out even more.



**The group in action** (Photo: Gowthama Poludasu)

We also noticed many Babblers, chirping away at each other. There were many more that our group leader showed us, and trust me when I tell you, each one was a beauty in its own right.

**Black Kite** (Photo: Ali Hyder)

**Common Myna** (Photo: Ali Hyder)

Hearing about bird-watching from my Uncle was always intriguing, but never did I think that I'd enjoy the art myself. Many thanks to Deccan Birders for making us feel so welcome, and of course, my dearest Uncle, Murthuza Hussain, for encouraging us all to take part in this quiet, peaceful, and truly interesting activity.

**Some members of the group during a break**
(Photo: Syed Murthuza Hussaini)

Indeed, I am glad to have sacrificed my sleep for a day with the winged creatures, the sun dancing between the leaves, and the wind swaying to their songs.

**The group at the outing** (Photo: Gowthama Poludasu)

The list of birds seen is given below:

| Sl No | Species Name | Scientific Name | Sl No | Species Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Indian Peafowl | *Pavo cristatus* | 13 | Black-headed Ibis | *Threskiornis melanocephalus* |
| 2 | Rock Pigeon | *Columba livia* | 14 | Little Egret | *Egretta garzetta* |
| 3 | Spotted Dove | *Spilopelia chinensis* | 15 | Indian Pond Heron | *Ardeola grayii* |
| 4 | Blue-faced Malkoha | *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris* | 16 | Eastern Cattle Egret | *Ardea coromanda* |
| 5 | Jacobin Cuckoo | *Clamator jacobinus* | 17 | Black Kite | *Milvus migrans* |
| 6 | Asian Koel | *Eudynamys scolopaceus* | 18 | Spotted Owlet | *Athene brama* |
| 7 | Grey-bellied Cuckoo | *Cacomantis passerinus* | 19 | Common Hoopoe | *Upupa epops* |
| 8 | Common Hawk Cuckoo | *Hierococcyx varius* | 20 | Indian Grey Hornbill | *Ocyceros birostris* |
| 9 | Grey-headed Swamphen | *Porphyrio poliocephalus* | 21 | Asian Green Bee-eater | *Merops orientalis* |
| 10 | White-breasted Waterhen | *Amaurornis phoenicurus* | 22 | White-throated Kingfisher | *Halcyon smyrnensis* |
| 11 | Red-wattled Lapwing | *Vanellus indicus* | 23 | Coppersmith Barbet | *Psilopogon haemacephalus* |
| 12 | Painted Stork | *Mycteria leucocephala* | 24 | Rose-ringed Parakeet | *Psittacula krameri* |

| Sl No | Species Name | Scientific Name | Sl No | Species Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | Black Drongo | *Dicrurus macrocercus* | 33 | Indian Pied Starling | *Gracupica contra* |
| 26 | Rufous Treepie | *Dendrocitta vagabunda* | 34 | Common Myna | *Acridotheres tristis* |
| 27 | House Crow | *Corvus splendens* | 35 | Oriental Magpie Robin | *Copsychus saularis* |
| 28 | Ashy Prinia | *Prinia socialis* | 36 | Purple-rumped Sunbird | *Leptocoma zeylonica* |
| 29 | Red-vented Bulbul | *Pycnonotus cafer* | 37 | Purple Sunbird | *Cinnyris asiaticus* |
| 30 | Indian White-eye | *Zosterops palpebrosus* | 38 | Indian Silverbill | *Euodice malabarica* |
| 31 | Large Grey Babbler | *Argya malcolmi* | 39 | White-browed Wagtail | *Motacilla maderaspatensis* |
| 32 | Yellow-billed Babbler | *Argya affinis* | | | |

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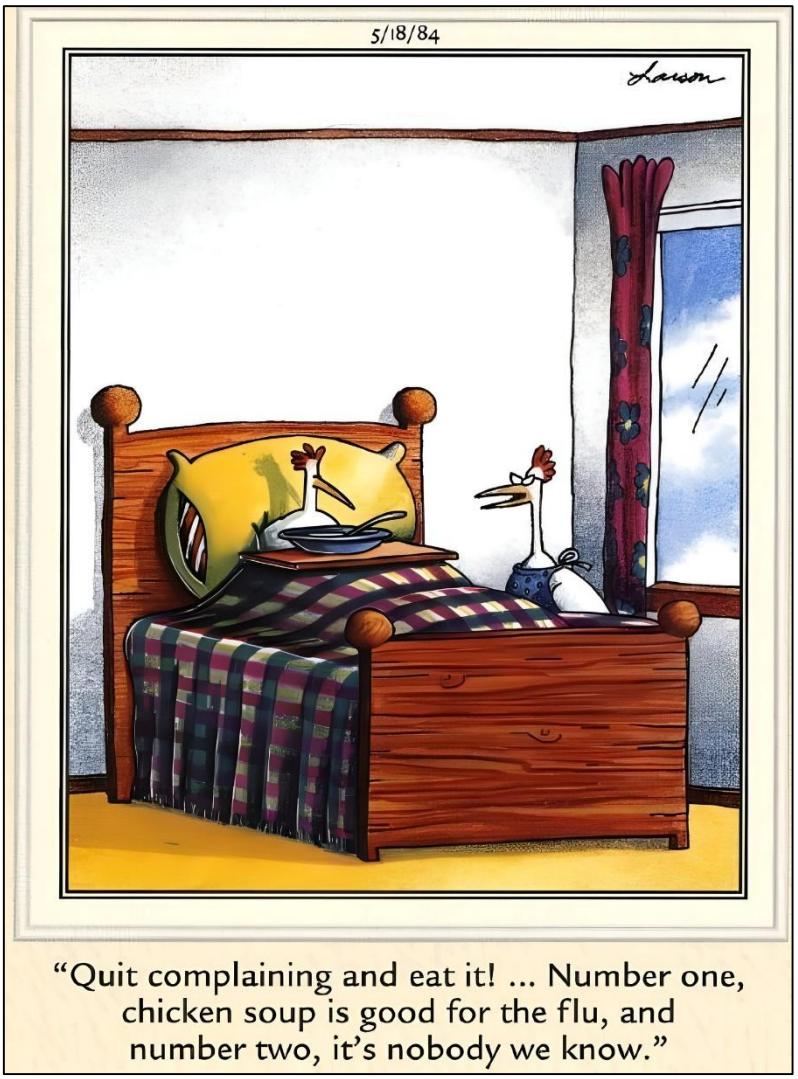
## Bird Humour

Umesh Mani




(From Facebook, September 12, 2025)

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## Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

# Slaty-breasted Rail (*Lewinia striata*)

**Slaty-breasted Rail** *L. s. albiventer* adult (Rollapadu, September 30, 2025)

**Slaty-breasted Rail** *L. s. obscurior* adult (L) and juvenile (R) (Andaman, April 11, 2026)

| | |
|---|---|
| Order: | Gruiformes |
| Family: | Rallidae |
| Genus: | *Lewinia* |
| Species: | *L. striata* |
| Size: | 27 cm |
| IUCN Status: | Least Concern |

Description & distribution: The Slaty-breasted Rail is a widespread resident breeder in India (including Andaman and Nicobar Islands) and Sri Lanka, besides being present in parts of China, Taiwan, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Borneo and Indonesia.

The Slaty-breasted Rail is a distinctive medium-sized, short-tailed rail, easily distinguished from other rails by the combination of chestnut head, nape and sides of neck, ashy-blue foreneck and breast, narrow white bars and spots on upperparts and wings, darker white-barred underparts and flanks, dark brown upperparts, and a fairly long reddish bill. Chin and throat is white, while eyes are red and legs are olive grey. The female is duller on the upperparts and has more white on the belly. The immature is like the adult but the white barring is less distinct; the upperparts, including crown and hindneck, are indistinctly streaked and darker; the breast is more brownish, and the underparts are paler. Eight subspecies are recognized, of which two are seen in India: *L. s. albiventer*, seen in most of India, and *L. s. obscurior*, seen in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which is darker overall with the grey on head and neck being markedly darker.

Habitat & behaviour: The Slaty-breasted Rail is a skulker and frequents reedy swamps, marshy meadows, mangroves, irrigated paddy fields, drainage ditches, and the vegetation around village tanks. It walks slowly about with an upright stance, jerking the tail at every step, but is not easily seen as it rarely comes out in the open. It may show local movements during times of drought or floods, but otherwise tends to stay in and around its patch. It is omnivorous, and its diet consists mainly of worms, molluscs, crustaceans, aquatic and terrestrial insects (including ants) and their larvae, and spiders; it also takes seeds and shoots of marsh plants. In flight, it flies with legs trailing behind the body. It is normally silent, but may occasionally utter a sharp loud whistle or short jerky screams.

Nesting: The Slaty-breasted Rail breeds mainly between mid-June and October. The nest is a pad of matted vegetation, around 25cm in size, and built on the ground or on reeds, and hidden inside marsh vegetation. The usual clutch consists of 5-7 cream coloured or darker eggs, smooth, glossy, spotted or blotched red or purple.

Local name: The Slaty-breasted Rail is known as *'Piroji pan lauva'* or *'Patawali santhakukdi'* in Punjabi, *'Wadi kodi'* in Telugu, *'Kanan kozhi'* in Tamil, *'Tuttuterippan'* in Malayalam, and *'Kirimeti korawaka'* in Sinhalese.

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**For information, write to:** Deccan Birders, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **Website:** www.deccanbirders.in. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/deccanbirders. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*